

NOTICE TO MARINERS

Newsletter of 32 Small Ship Sqn RAE Association Incorporating RAE Tn

Patron: Colonel K.L. Duncan (Rtd)

President's Message

I would like to offer a warm new Web Site Manager. He has has enough on his plate with studying at university. Thanks for Jack.

At a recent committee meeting it not been keeping up with production time. Postage and printing rates 20 years whereas the subscription rate has been static at \$10.00. Most other Army unit associations now charge up to \$30.00 per year. We think our Association still has one of the lowest subscription rates which will increase to \$15.00 with effect from 25 April 2015. Members who have paid subs in advance will not have to pay any extra.

Also, a reminder that you can now pay subs, raffles, purchase of stock, etc electronically. Cheques, money orders (or even cash) are still welcome but if you prefer the direct debit method the details are BSB 062182 Account No: 0090 2492. Please follow up with an email or post a note to Peter Tierney advising him what you are paying for. This is important!

The Australian Government will donate two recently decommissioned Landing Craft Heavy (LCH) vessels to the Philippine Navy, along with a package of spare parts. Australian Defence Minister Kevin Andrews said the former Royal Australian Navy Vessels *HMAS Tarakan* and *Brunei* would be refitted with safety and navigation equipment and be ready for a hand over in May 2015.

A lack of sealift capability hampered the rescue effort to assist the Philippines' coastal areas after Typhoon Haiyan hit in 2013. "The landing craft will greatly improve the Philippines' ability to respond to natural disasters by enabling heavy equipment and large amounts of aid to be moved to affected areas," Mr Andrews said. The LCH vessels can transport personnel and equipment to difficult to reach areas during disaster relief missions.

Members will remember that LCH *L126 Balikpapan* was delivered to the Australian Army in December 1971 and operated in Army colours until it was transferred to the Navy in September 1974. She was decommissioned in December 2012 after an impressive 41 years service

Ocka

J'aimais etre remorque



welcome to Dazz Graney as our taken over from Jack Madden who publishing the newsletter and your past efforts with the web site,

was learned that subscriptions had costs for the newsletter for some have more than tripled in the last



March 2015 Notice to Mariners

ANZAC DAY ACTIVITIES – SATURDAY 25 APRIL 2015

I'm sure members will check the details of ANZAC Day dawn services and marches in their own area so I'll just put in details for Sydney for those who are visiting or attending.

DAWN SERVICE – SCHOOL OF MILITARY ENGINEERING

This service will be held at SMEs new location at Holsworthy. Enter off the roundabout at the Voyager Point turnoff on Heathcoat Road. The Catafalque Party will mount at 0510 hrs and the service will commence shortly after. On completion of the service a breakfast may be available at the All Ranks Mess. Note that this service is very popular so if you are attending please try and get there by 0430 hrs. Car parking will be available. Also be aware of the strict security requirements. You will need to have photo ID (drivers licence is OK) to gain access to Holsworthy / SME.

DAWN SERVICE – GEORGES HEIGHTS

The service will be conducted on the parade ground of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust precinct commencing at 0530 hrs. The ANZAC Address will be given by Commander Paul Gall RAN, CO of *HMAS Penguin*. A light breakfast will be provided by the Mosman Lions Club at a nominal cost. Parking will be controlled by SES.

ANZAC DAY MARCH – SYDNEY

NOTE NEW FORM UP POSITION. Assemble on Bent Street facing west behind 17 Construction Squadron at 1000 hrs. Step off time is usually around 1100 hrs which will give us time to renew acquaintances and take refreshment before the long march to Hyde Park. The 8 Engineer Regiment Banner Party will lead the way, and after it has formed up we will assemble behind it and follow the sappers. Coat, tie and medals please.

ANZAC DAY REUNION AND LUNCHEON – SYDNEY

As usual the reunion will be held at the Hunters Hill RSL Sub-Branch Memorial Hall on the corner of Alexander and Ady Streets, Hunters Hill. A high quality spit roast lunch with vegetables and salads, desserts and fruit platters will be served at 1315 hrs. Please try and be there by then. Again we have managed to keep the cost down to \$50.00 per head which includes drinks (beer, soft, spirits and wine). To put it on at this low price we need to know early the numbers attending, so please submit your return slip as soon as possible. **For those who turn up unannounced the cost will be \$70.00 a head.**

ANZAC DAY RAFFLE

The raffle is on again and your tickets are enclosed or will be posted. The prizes are :

First Prize: 150mm Ships Radio Room Clock.

Second Prize: 150mm Ships Radio Room Clock.

Third Prize: 150mm Ships Radio Room Clock

These popular prizes are made of solid brass or chrome and mounted on polished hardwood. The tickets are still only \$1.00 each or ten for \$10.00.



ANZAC DAY 2015 – BRISBANE

John Jesser from the Sappers Association Qld has advised the following:

The ANZAC Day Dawn Service will be held at 2CER Enoggera at 4.45am.

The ANZAC Day Parade will begin at 9.30am Sat 25 April 2015, following the march, the Association function will be at the International Hotel, 525 Boundary Street, Spring Hill.

(Ed note: If you are planning on going to the Dawn Service at Enoggera **go early** due to the expected crowds plus added security at the main gate. You will need Photo ID to get in and they will enforce that).

ANZAC DAY IN CHINA

We received this interesting story from Gerry Dunn:

Thought this little ditty may be appropriate for your Anzac Day edition. Last year whilst travelling around Asia, my wife Deb and I did a four day river cruise on the Yangtze River in China. At our allocated dining table was a small tour group from the UK. Part of this group was a gentleman from Scotland, by the name of Alistair Simpson, who was an ex Merchant Sea Captain, and his wife Mairi. Over dinner I told him that I had done a little bit of time at sea with 32 Small Ship Squadron, and that was when, to my shock, he advised that he did his Mates training in Scotland with a couple of likely types that answered the call to skipper 32's fleet.

When I asked who he told me Tom Moyes and Andy Laidlaw. What a coincidence in such a far flung place. I told Alistair that Tom was one of my skippers and had passed on but did not know where Andy Laidlaw was. I have attached a couple of photos, and if you check the date it is Anzac Day 2014, it really did make me think of old friends.



Alistair Simpson, Mairi Simpson and Gerry Dunn



March 2015 Notice to Mariners

VALE - JIM CURTIS
18 April 1932 - 4 February 2015

Major James Curtis RAE died peacefully on 4 February 2015 after a long illness. His family were by his side at home in Perth WA. Jim was a very competent Administrative Officer at HQ 32 Small Ship Squadron. He also served on LSMs as the Executive Officer. He worked hard to ensure that the administration of this unusual unit was maintained at a high standard which was rather difficult with five ships, with most at sea. It was always a juggle to keep the ships manned with only about three and a half crews available. He managed to do this well, and with good humour.

Jim first joined the CMF in 1948 and served until 1959 with the last five years on full time service. He then transferred to the ARA and served until 1977 when he elected discharge. Then he immediately transferred to the CMF again and served until December 1981 - an impressive total of 33 years in the service of his country.

Units he served with were: 6 Infantry Battalion, 2 Heavy Anti Aircraft Regiment, 14 National Service Training Battalion, Southern Command Provost Company, 3 Division Provost Company, 1 Lines of Communication Provost Company, 11 Movement Control Group, 32 Small Ship Squadron, 35 Water Transport Squadron, Army Headquarters, 1 Watercraft Workshop and Reserve Staff Group.

Whilst in 32 Small Ship Squadron he served in Vietnam on *AV1353 Harry Chauvel*, *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee* and *AV1356 Clive Steele*.

Our condolences go to Jim's wife Kate and their family.

At Jim's funeral the Squadron was represented by Bill Culbertson who reported as follows:

"Today I had the honour to attend the ceremony in Mandurah to remember the life of Jim Curtis. It was a small but close group of family and friends and the chaplain was from the local RSL, while at the end of the service the Last Post, Reveille and the Oath was delivered by the President of the same RSL.

Jim's son, Alex, delivered the eulogy that emphasised Jim's love of family, pets, boats, yachts and ships. Unknown to me they had both competed in a handful of Sydney to Hobart yacht races, including the disastrous one in 1998.

Jim's wife, Kate and the family were pleased that someone from 32 Small Ship Squadron was able to attend, and it was my pleasure to be that person.

Bill Culbertson".



NEW MEMBER

Paul Turner served on *AS3051 John Monash* in 1973. He lives at Hampton Park Victoria.

VALE - CHRIS FREEMAN

Our Welfare Officer, Bob Freeman, lost his wife, Chris on 26 December 2014. She had a DVT about 13 years ago and had a heart attack in December. Her funeral was held on 5 January 2015 and was attended by many family and friends.

Members of our Association who attended were: Rod and Sue Cook, Dave and June Thomas, John and Carrol Spindler, Brian and Val Waites, Dazz Graney and Des McDonald. Many members who couldn't be there sent letters and cards of sympathy.

Our condolences to Bob and his children, Dale, Jade and Glen.

GEELONG GETAWAY

By now you should have received details about the 'Geelong Getaway' to be held during 16 - 18 October 2015. David Gray and Brendan McCormack are organising it and are expecting a good turnout.

The newsletter they distributed contains details of accommodation available and the program over the week end. If you haven't received the newsletter and would like to attend please contact either David at david_hellen@hotmail.com Phone 0418 543 355 or Brendan at micomac@y7mail.com

It looks like being a great week end so have a think about it and see if you and your partners and mates (if you have any) can get down to the Bellarine Peninsular and enjoy a wonderful part of the country on the banks of the Barwon River and meet up with old cobbers and maybe some new ones. You never know...

You might even catch a flathead like this



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SICK PARADE

Mal Campbell is not travelling well. He was recently diagnosed with leukaemia and although he is responding to treatment his future is not good. Mal is a good supporter of the Association and has also been heavily involved with Army Apprentices reunions. We wish him a good recovery from this debilitating condition. Hang in there mate.

If you would like to contact Mal he can be reached on 02 9929 0663 or malc@malbargroup.com.au

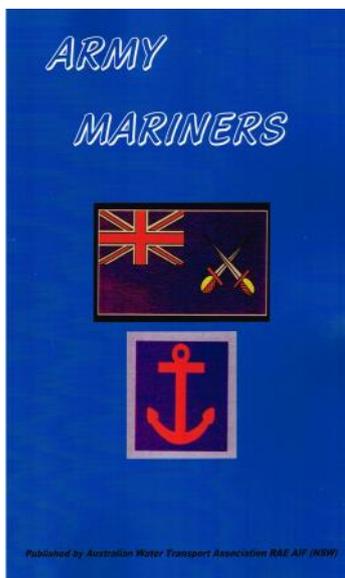
LOOKING FOR PETER HODGES

A few years ago we asked if anybody knew the whereabouts of Peter Hodges. His family is still looking for him. One of his brothers is sick and his family would like Peter to contact them. If anyone knows of Peter could they ask him to contact any of these :

Marg Stenner (sister) 041 733 293
Chris Hodges (brother) 0397 495 942
Jeff Hodges (brother) 0448 699 930.

216193 CPL Peter John Hodges RAE served with 32 Small Ship Squadron in Vietnam on *AS3051 John Monash* from 25 October 1969 to 7 December 1969, and on *AV1353 Brudenell White* from 22 September 1970 to 24 October 1970.

NEW BOOK



The Army Water Transport Association RAE AIF (NSW) has produced a new book titled 'Army Mariners'.

There has been several books printed about AWT in the past including the AWT Association's "Log Book" which is a 30 page newsletter and is produced about three times per year. Much newfound material on WWII AWT units resulted in the production of 'Army Mariners'. It is a quality book, with plenty of pictures and has 234 pages. 32 Small Ship Squadron gets a mention.

We only have a few copies so if you want one get in touch with Kaye Shannon. See 'Property for Sale' at the end of the newsletter. It costs \$45.00 plus postage.



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AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS LIST - EUGENE HARLEY

Congratulations to one of our Honorary Chaplains, Reverend Monsignor Eugene Harley for being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the General Division. It was awarded to him for service to the Catholic Church in Australia. Here is a little of his history:

He was born in Lithgow NSW in 1930.

He was ordained as a Priest in 1953.

Served in the Australian Army as a Chaplain with 2 RAR in Malaya in 1961 - 63.

Served with 1 Special Air Service Squadron, 3 RAR, and 2 Troop (RAE), 11 Independent Field Squadron RE in Borneo in 1965.

Served with HQ Australian Force Vietnam in 1967.

Served in many postings around Australia with the Army as a Chaplain.

He retired from the Australian Army as the Principal Catholic Chaplain (Brigadier) in 1985.

He was a Parish Priest of Mosman, NSW during 1986 - 2004.

Elevated to 'Monsignor' in 2003.

He was Pastor Emeritus, Sacred heart Church Mosman, Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney since 2004.

Monsignor Harley OAM lives in Mosman NSW.



The Reverend Monsignor Eugene Harley OAM. (Photo by Mosman Council).



TONY JONES - 30 TERMINAL SQUADRON

We recently received an email from Tony Jones:

"Having just discovered your address in the 32 Small Ship Squadron newsletter of September 2004, I'm writing to introduce myself.

One of the photos in the newsletter showed a small group of guys aboard *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee* during its 1964 deployment to Borneo. Bob Gunn is standing facing several others sitting along the side of the ship. All are named except me. I'm the 'question mark'.

Parachuted in from 3 RAR, Brisbane in 1962, I was posted to the Tn Centre Chowder Bay and then to 30 Port /Terminal Squadron at Georges Heights, commanded by Major Jim McFarlane and I was very sad to learn belatedly of his passing. In some ways, similar to Jim, I too was a 15 years young seaman, but in the British Merchant Navy.

After completing my six years enlistment I qualified for the Institute of Public Relations, followed by three years (1966 / 69) with the Directorate of Army PR at Victoria Barracks, Sydney. I then returned to England and now live in Canada. Now aged 73, I'm hoping you may be able to refer me to other members with whom I may have enjoyed "the best years of my life".

If anyone remembers Tony please contact him at globaltraveler@adventureguide.com or on Facebook: **Globaltraveler10**

I answered Tony's email and followed up with a few names he might remember from the Borneo trip. He replied as follows...

"Arthur Jackson? I remember the name, but would need help remembering his face. Please say hello to him for me. Mike Heal was of course (much liked and respected) Master of *Vernon Sturdee*, but he would have no reason to remember me. Bill Couchman was a good friend and as the senior NCO (WO2) on the Borneo trip was leader of the Tn Center contingent. I'll attach a couple of pictures showing Bill looking away from the camera. He's wearing the WO2 cap. Wonder if Bill is still alive? In another, we were loading/unloading from *HMAS Sydney*. I'm back to camera wearing beret. Another picture was taken when a small group of us were dispatched to RAAF Richmond for an Air Movements (Weight and Balance) course with RAAF officers. Almost all mathematics, but we all passed. (I'm back row far left) After all that mental sweat and tears I was posted to the dark and smelly Sydney railway station for a few months...writing up train tickets, supervised by an elderly Lieutenant whose name I don't recall.

As you can imagine, transferring in 1962 or 1963 from the strict regimentation of 3RAR, bypassing SME, direct to Chowder Bay seemed in many ways like joining McHale's Navy. Only a couple of officers, primarily Jim McFarlane, several senior NCOs, and a handful of corporals. Of course time will distort memory, but I seem to recall that Norm Holdsworth was the main guy on my arrival, supported by John Sainsbury and Bob Metcalf.

However, within the first year, top brass seems to have remembered this enjoyably relaxed little encampment on the beautiful shores of Sydney Harbour. Lieutenant Colonel Laughlin arrived, and suddenly we seemed to be surrounded by over-enthusiastic young officers including Lieutenants Morgan, Elphingstone, Merrick and Holton. Following my promotion to sergeant, I became friends with Horse Horrigan, Skinny Truslove, Les Hocking, and Brick Bradford etc.. Doug Iffla was, I believe master of "*Tarra*" around this time.



On my return to Chowder Bay from Borneo I sat one evening with Mike Holton, passing the time as Duty NCO/Officer. The end of my six year engagement was approaching in 1965. Mr Holton suggested I apply to attend the “knife and fork” course. In what I now believe was one of the major wrong decisions of my life, I decided to leave the army. Main reason being...a woman!! During my last few months service, I managed “the new” Sergeants’ Mess, (during its construction I used to practice my saxophone in the empty halls - wonderful acoustics) and had a part-time job at the Clifton Gardens Hotel. A few years later I ran into an old friend from Tn Center days, Eddy Edstein. He had completed the senior NCO to officer training course, and now worked as a Lieutenant or Captain in Victoria Barracks, Sydney. They could not have made a finer choice of officer in my opinion.

As mentioned in my previous note, I then worked for three years as a civilian in the Directorate of Army Public Relations at Victoria Barracks, Sydney. We worked out of a small four person office at the back of the Barracks led by Lieutenant Colonel Tim Swifte.

One of my colleagues, Warner Russell, was a “Sun” reporter serving as a part time Public relations Officer. Through the magic of the internet, I recently exchanged several letters with Warner. Amazingly, and completely beyond my knowledge or suspicion, he and the Lieutenant Colonel were working concurrently as government spies!

Reporting to Tim Swifte, and through Tim to Sir Arthur Tange (Secretary of Defence) Warner led quite an exciting undercover life, including visits to Colonel Gadhafi in Libya. If interested, you can buy Warner’s recently published book about his experiences, “Shadows of a Spy,” on line for just a few dollars. Prior to Lieutenant Colonel Swifte, I was hired by Lieutenant Colonel John Bennet, himself a very interesting officer. I only recently learned that it was he who oversaw the investigation into Prime Minister Harold Holt’s disappearance. And I thought I was working each day with just a friendly group of regular journalists!

Enough of all that sidetracking gobbledygook. Then followed three years with Barclays Bank London head office. Back to Sydney in 1972 for a few years as marketing director, South Pacific, for PFEL (ex Matson Lines) SFO – based luxury liners, Mariposa/Monterey. Canada called my family in 1976. Toronto then Vancouver in various marketing positions within the international travel industry, and in more recent years a travel writer specialising in adventure and eco-tourism. Most enjoyable of my many writing assignments were two 18 days trips back to Malaysia/Borneo sponsored by Tourism Malaysia. I was able to return to many of the places first visited aboard *Vernon Sturdee* way back in 1964. After telling my government guide of a 1964 experience in which I was placed in charge of a steam train carrying ammunition from Jesselton (renamed Kota Kinabalu) up the mountains to Beaufort, he was able to take me to an under-construction museum and show me the actual train. I’ll attach a picture I took showing a couple of my Tn Center mates on the train.

I’ve read quite a lot about poor living conditions suffered by crews aboard the LSMs. I only experienced them for a few months, so sympathize with the permanent guys based on board for several years. I was recently in touch with a Tn Center friend, John Farrow. He is in poor health, I think unrelated to the LSMs though.

Last in Australia (Brisbane) in 2007, I’m thinking it’s time to make a trip back to Sydney. Let’s see how the next few months work out.



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And finally Ross...as if you need further reading, you may enjoy a short story I wrote for CBC Radio a few years back, about "The book that most changed my life." In it I refer briefly to time aboard the LSM.

http://www.adventureguide.com/articles/Treasure%20Island/Treasure_Island.html

Best wishes, Tony Jones



The top picture shows WO2 Bill Couchman (with cap) and the back of Tony Jones on board AV1355 *Vernon Sturdee* in Borneo with AV1353 *Harry Chauvel* in background. The bottom picture is *Vernon Sturdee* loaded with plant equipment for 7 Field Squadron.



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CHRONIC LYMPHOID LEUKAEMIA

Les Dennis provided the following information about problems with using water produced by evaporative distillation systems aboard military vessels serving in Vietnam...

"Information regarding this matter can be found via Google search – RMA (Repatriation Medical Authority). Once there, the Statement of Principles (SOPs) tab allows a search by number and year (SOP No 28 of 2014).

As I read it, the SOP details some new service conditions accepted by RMA as causation factors implicated in the subject illness. The specific issue raised in the original message from Naval Assn is the acceptance by the RMA that personnel who were subject to the conditions detailed in SOP 28 para 2(A) point (ad) during service in a war zone and have the subject illness may have grounds for a claim for medical support and/or compensation if it can be shown that the person was exposed to TCDD (Dioxin) in the manner described by the SOP, ie, consuming water originating from waters contaminated by Dioxin.

Military vessels in Vietnamese waters drew contaminated water into their purification systems and crews drank it, cooked with it and showered in it. Long after the war finished, it was proven that dioxins were not removed by evaporative distillation and evidence supported the view that many illnesses were caused by such exposures. The original message applauds the inclusion of the subject illness as sufferers may now be eligible for support.

Dr Rod Bain (NSW RSL State Council) served in the RAN during the Vietnam war on Hobart and Sydney (as well as in-country) and has worked tirelessly for ex-servicemen's health issues. As a survivor of prostate cancer, he has been an outspoken advocate for speaking with a GP early and getting medical intervention. He probably has info somewhere on-line about most men's health issues.

I hope there's some useful info in here. Basically, an ex-serviceman who was exposed to dioxins and has any cancer should follow up with an advocate from their local RSL or Vietnam Veterans' Association." So if you think this information affects you, perhaps you should follow it up as suggested.

USS LSM-45

A few members have asked about the fate of USS LSM-45. It was the one that the US sold to the Greek Navy in 1958 where it served until 1998. The Amphibious Museum of the Americas (AMA) then bought it and towed it back to the US where it was placed in the Museum of Freedom Park, Omaha, Nebraska. It then came under control of the USS LSM-LSMR Association. While it was there being refurbished Dave Perham and Bruce Reilly volunteered their services and did some work on it along with members of the Association. However, despite many hours work put in by the volunteers the hierarchy were unhappy with the maintenance and upkeep and began looking for a new home for the ship. It was then moved to the Museum of Marine in Jacksonville, North Carolina in 2004. It was then going to be sold as a barge but this didn't happen and it was scrapped instead. What a shame...

(ED Note: Last I heard it was in the USMC Museum at Camp Lejeune North Carolina but I'll check before the next edition)

TALES OF TWO TRAINS

Here are two stories about trains and railways. One is about the experiences of a Duty Officer on a train from Kuala Lumpur to Penang and the other is about the experiences of a Rail Transport Officer during *Exercise Kangaroo 1* near Rockhampton...



1955 – The Night Express to Penang¹

A Personal Recollection of some 57 Years Ago

MAJOR W M MONCUR MCIT MIPLANTÉ MINSTRE



Bill Moncur, now 82, served from 1948 until taking voluntary retirement in 1969. His service with the Corps covered Field, Transportation and Movements, Training, and Staff, with assignments in UK, BAOR, Korea, Malaya, Australia and Cyprus. His last three years was with RCT before taking up a new career in industry culminating in due course in setting up his own consultancy in the field of Fluid Power (Hydraulics). Since his Service days, Bill has participated in several Corps and RE Transportation History projects associated with the Mulberry Harbours and the 'D' Day Museum at Arromanches.

THIS episode was first written by me many years ago for “family archival digestion” only and extracted recently from deep within my filing cabinet in response to a readership request from the Editor of the *WWII Railway Study Group* for any reminiscences of those who had at one time performed the duties of Officer I/C Train. Whilst not of WWII vintage, it was during a period of Active Service in Malay and for that reason the Editor – perhaps because he was short of material – chose to print it for membership circulation. An eminent Corps author happened to read it and thought it might be of interest to readers of the *Corps Journal*, so here it is.

As a Royal Engineer Captain, I was stationed in Kuala Lumpur from 1954 until 1956 fulfilling the role of the Staff Officer at HQ Malaya Command responsible for the supply and maintenance of all the engineer plant operating in the jungles of Malaya. The job was an absorbing one that thankfully took me out into the field frequently to visit Jungle Road Projects, and Jungle Forts with Airstrips.

Recently arrived from Korea, I had just got married in Malaya, having brought Rosel, my fiancée out from the UK. We had taken up residence in a rented bungalow just off the Circular Road in the northern sector of Kuala Lumpur. The event I relate to happened as follows.

I had been out visiting a unit all day and returned rather tired to my home at about 6pm, where my wife had prepared our evening meal and proudly laid everything out on our newly acquired dining table.

One’s normal practice would be to throw off the starched jungle green uniform of tunic and shorts with knee length stockings, puttees and boots; and quickly shower and change

into something comfortable to accommodate the balmy Malayan evening.

I hesitated however as something was bothering me which I could not quite pin down in my mind.

“Aren’t you going to get changed?” Rosel enquired, anxious to get on with serving up the meal she had prepared.

“I have got something in the back of my mind and I can’t think what it is” I responded, indicating a reluctance to get out of my uniform. “Let’s sit down for our meal first”.

The first course of soup was just being served when the sound of thunder crashed overhead accompanied almost immediately by the “whoosh” of the early evening tropical downpour which at that time always arrived like clockwork and lasted for about an hour, leaving the rest of the evening pleasantly cool and relaxing.

Hardly had I put the spoon to my lips when the strident ringing of the telephone distracted me. “It’s for you” said Rosel, handing the receiver to me.

“Captain Moncur?” “Yes” I responded.

“This is the RTO² at Kuala Lumpur Main Station. I understand you are the Duty Officer for this evening’s departing night train to Penang”

“You should be here as the train leaves in a few minutes and I need to complete the handover procedure.”

Immediately my mind went into a spin. This was the missing link behind my memory lapse. The repercussions were formidable to say the least. I had done this duty, which befell all staff officers at the HQ, once before, and I was well aware

¹ Penang is of course an Island. The railway owned the Ferry Service which connected the mainland to Georgetown, the principal town on the Island. The destination remained as Penang.

² RTO. The designation of the Rail Transport Officer, normally a Movement Control Officer or NCO stationed at all key military routing nodes such as main rail stations or interchanges.

of the extent of the designated responsibilities. Adrenalin surged and sent my pulse racing. This was truly an emergency of my own making! For some reason I had completely forgotten about this extramural duty and my diary, which would have alerted me, was safely tucked away in the locked drawer of my office desk. In a flash the implications of my forgetfulness were staring me in the face.

Let me explain that each night, express trains between both Singapore and Kuala Lumpur; and Kuala Lumpur and Penang; and likewise in the opposite direction, were liable to be ambushed and possibly derailed by Communist insurgents who could emerge with ease from the cover of the jungle and plantations through which the trains would pass. Consequently each train would be manned by an armed party under an NCO Guard Commander suitably equipped and armed to engage with the bandits. Communications would be maintained by a Royal Signals operator with a radio suitable for mobile rail communications. A medical orderly would complete the organisation. The whole would come under command of the Duty Train Officer, the role to which I had been designated.

Some 15 minutes before departure, a pilot train made up of a locomotive pushing a ballasted flat car would proceed ahead of the main train, ostensibly to provide advanced protection for the express by way of early warning and the possible acceptance of the brunt of any explosive charge laid on the line.

“What would you like me to do?” the anxious voice, sensing an oncoming problem, came from the other end of the phone. My mind was racing.

He needed an answer fast and I knew that the five or six miles through the town would be too far for me to get to the station in time. Furthermore the “standing procedures” for undertaking this important assignment would normally take not less than half an hour of formalities. Such formalities included briefing the Guard Commander and troops assigned to the train; also checking the loading of ammunition, medical supplies including morphine, blood plasma, rations, radios etc. This was an impending disorganisation of unknown proportions as the safety of the train and all on board was clearly the responsibility of the assigned Duty Officer in Charge.

“I need your response,” said the RTO, no doubt already anticipating his next call to report the matter to the Duty Officer at HQ Malaya Command.

My mind was still racing! He needed a decision and I had no plan of action. I needed time to think, damn it!

“Hand all the cargo and the Orders to the nearest senior rank on the train and appoint him temporarily in command complete with authority armband. I will re-contact as soon as possible.” Nebulous though it may have sounded, at least it was an order to which he could respond in the limited time available.

I grabbed my hat held out to me by Rosel and raced out of the bungalow straight into the tropical rain storm then pitching down. To use my car would not be appropriate, as it might well become an encumbrance rather than a help. I needed to get a taxi, I thought. But where? We lived some distance from such facilities. Perhaps I could stop a car, but fat chance I would have of even being seen in the downpour. Perhaps I could do something crazy – I knew not then what –

about getting on that train which would be leaving in a few minutes. Could I perhaps borrow from some Hollywood ideas? I was then, after all, a fit twenty five year old!

The quickest way on to the main Circular road which ran past, was on the other side of a normally impenetrable hedge – was to go through it. Straight into it I charged, and emerged on the roadside now not only soaked but now looking and feeling completely dishevelled – but still holding on to my hat. No time to worry about that.

Suddenly, the Good Lord was on my side, as unbelievably before me, in the pouring rain, was a stationary taxi being paid off by an Indian lady from the nearby Tamil Indian village bordering our bungalow complex. In one hand she was struggling to hold her umbrella with her Sari train folded over her elbow to protect it from the splattering rain at her feet whilst with the other hand she was trying to complete her transaction. She was completely surprised as I shot past her into the back of the taxi. The driver was also startled but noticing the uniform and my agitated sense of urgency, obviously concluded that this was an unusual fare, unlikely to be persuaded to get out, should the thought have ever crossed his mind.

My first immediate thought – it could hardly be called an appraisal – was that thankfully the vehicle was pointing in the direction that would take me towards the railway line. That at least was an encouraging plus point eliminating time wasting U turns against unseen passing traffic.

“Where to Tuan?” was the obviously intelligent question that could not be answered.

“Drive on!” was my unhelpful response. I was desperately trying to remember where the road bridge passed over the railway. Could I perhaps stop the train; perhaps grab a handrail on it from some vantage point; perhaps even do a daring leap such as is achieved only in films? The torrential rain and the pitch darkness tended to repress the likely success of any of those opportunities.

The driver kept glancing anxiously over his shoulder with his foot hard on the accelerator. Whatever his passenger’s mission might be, the look on his face clearly belied a desperate, as yet undeclared situation.

My thoughts were madly seeking a brain wave. Suddenly I had a thought! Yes of course! It might just be possible. I remembered that the Railway line to the north out of Kuala Lumpur took a long loop around what was known as Templar’s Park, a kind of large National Park close to the town. This loop followed a wide curvature that I recalled would require the train to maintain a relatively slow speed before turning north and gathering speed again. That was it! I could hopefully gain headway and race the train northwards!

Following my logic, if it could be called that, I remembered that about thirty miles to the north the rubber estate then managed by my Scottish hometown friend Tom Elder, and known as Sungei Gapi Estate, straddled the railway and had its own unprotected level crossing. However, at that point I was aware, as I had previously witnessed it, the train would indeed be travelling at its best pace. Clearly it could not be stopped there. However, I again remembered that about two miles south of that level crossing there was a small hamlet provided with a halt and passing loop. More importantly, I recalled having once seen what may have been a signal box.

It was unlikely that it would ever normally have been used to halt an express, especially The Night Express to Penang. Without a doubt this was my only chance. At least it was a plan of action “made on the hoof” so to speak. We would now race the train.

Immediately my instructions rang out to the taxi driver whose unquestioning support I now needed above all else. I was able to shout to him the reason for my peculiar behaviour before reaching the road junction that would take us northwards. Thankfully he responded as best as he could, considering the appalling driving conditions. I think the idea of racing the Night Express began to appeal to him. A lesser man might have balked at the task. It was then that I realised that I had no money with me to pay him. Clearly this was no time to bother his thought processes with this potentially, diverting information. Too many other uncertainties lay ahead, such as, firstly, had he enough petrol to get me there? Apparently he did. Would the signal box, if it existed, be manned? I knew not. How would I stop the train, presuming that we could get there first? Again I knew not!

We were travelling fast, but the train would also now be well under way. Given the efficient Malayan Military Emergency conditions it would have been unacceptable for it to have left other than as timetabled. After some distance my attention now concentrated on ensuring that we did not pass the turn off to the hamlet. To pass it perhaps by several miles would incur an irrecoverable time loss. To reach the rather unclear sign for the rubber estate would have confirmed that we had gone too far. The driver was essentially a town driver and not au fait with the district. Any mistake would be mine only.

Luckily I spotted the track and we turned off for about a half mile and swept into the small hamlet alongside the railway halt. Out of the corner of my eye I spotted a barricaded police post only a short distance from the Railway but my state of apprehension was concentrated on the Signal Box which did indeed exist and appearing dimly lit was apparently occupied. I raced up the steps of the box and knocked on the locked door. Sure enough it was occupied by an Indian signalman, who seeing a uniformed British officer, quickly unlocked the door. Luckily he spoke English.

“Has the Penang Express gone through?”

“No Tuan, only the Pilot Train about five minutes ago”

“I require you to stop the Night Express as I need to board it!”

He looked at me startled, but I could see that he realised from my demeanour, that I meant it.

He nodded but I could see from his expression that this was “new territory” for him

I said “How soon?” Glancing at his clock he said “less than 10 minutes now Tuan.”

We had done well!

I immediately thought of the Police Station. I estimated that I just had time to dash the few yards there and quickly explain my situation. This would reinforce the protection of the Signaller should he be subjected to discipline later.

I first watched the Signaller set the levers to throw his Outer and Home Signals and the track turn out³ to bring the Express to a halt on the loop. I then immediately ran to the Police Post. My luck was again with me. As I entered the sentry acknowledged me with a salute and a smart Malayan NCO Policeman behind the counter appraised my sudden arrival with a cool professional exterior. I admired him for it. We exchanged salutes and in a few words he understood my situation. I also noticed that he had some chained and locked firearms on a rack and I asked him if he could issue a side arm against my signature. Again there was complete understanding and within seconds I had signed for an automatic pistol, with webbing belt, holster and a pouch of ammunition. I would normally have drawn this from the armoury at HQ



The Malay Peninsula.

³ The rail gauge of Malayan Railways is 1 metre.

Malay Command. He shouldered his carbine and hurried with me. The time taken for me to return to the box could not have taken more than three or four minutes, thanks to the quick understanding of the Policeman.

I now just had time to make my confession to the waiting taxi driver. Thankfully I would not need him to return me to my home. I asked how much I owed him for the return trip. If he had asked me for my month's salary it would have been insufficient to pay for the service he had rendered me. I recall that his tariff was not unreasonable. I then shook his hand in acceptance and then added that he would have to collect it from my wife. His look betrayed an expression such that nothing else about this officer would surprise him, but there was no grief. Borrowing a sheet from the policeman's notebook I scribbled a note asking Rosel to pay off the taxi driver and if devoid of the necessary amount, to give him a cash cheque. It was useful also that his mission to be recompensed would enable her to know that I had overcome my problem, and she could get a night's sleep without further concern.

The signalman had clearly looked pleased to see me return accompanied by the Policeman.

"The Express is approaching, Tuan!"

Sure enough, there it was in the distance already slowing down in accordance with the outer signals, and aware of an anticipated halt at the Signal box. A blast on his whistle indicated the locomotive driver's acknowledgement and no doubt concern – if not his displeasure and that of his hard pressed fireman.

As the locomotive⁴ cranked alongside, blowing off the excess steam for which she had been fired for fast running, both the driver and his sweating fireman were leaning out with questioning glares. The sight of two uniforms eased their concern, and as he came to a halt, I shouted up to him through the background steam that I was the OC train and joining it at this point. Looking to the rear of the train, I could see that the NCO of the guard unit had dismounted and was peering in my direction. I waved him back on board as I myself mounted the

front carriage. The locomotive driver, accepting his now clear signal, engaged his regulator and we slowly gathered speed. I turned to wave to my three benefactors, hardly believing that I had won the day. I was truly **ON BOARD!**

There was still work to be done however. By now I had dried out and at least looked reasonably respectable. I headed straight for the Security coach at the rear of the train passing the questioning stares of the passengers unaware of the drama they had been taking part in.

I needed to get a signal off immediately to the Duty Officer at HQ Malaya Command to confirm my presence on board the train. (I discovered later that it arrived just in time as alternative arrangements were about to be set up at a major garrison station, possibly Ipoh further up the line.)

My next requirement was to take possession of my written orders and documents, and to retrieve my Movement Control Armband, my badge of authority as OC Train. It was just as well that I arrived when I did. I found a senior rank in my reserved compartment who on noting the badge of authority worn by someone of lesser rank to himself had then confiscated the armband from the original less senior NCO who had been given it. That was perhaps not wholly irresponsible given the circumstances but he just happened to be accompanied by a uniformed member of the opposite sex and they clearly had intentions of making good use of the additional privacy that my compartment would provide. My timely arrival put paid to that. I made short work of the situation and somewhat chastened they were glad to escape to their former less privileged seats.

After completing my rounds and making my presence known to all key personnel I was glad to sit down for a moment and reflect on the crazy last two hours or so which might well have had serious consequences for me – perish the thought! Happily the rest of the journey was undisturbed.

Like all other Duty Officers I was able to spend a restful day at the Beach Hotel at Penang before performing the same duty on the Night Express South the following day.

Railway aficionados might like to know that the likely locomotive of the period would have been a pre WW2 wheel notation based on the earlier L Class, the K Class was a 4-6-2 tender locomotive with an 8 wheel bogey tender. The first batch of Class Ks were essentially an improved version of the L Class; with further improvements made on the second batch. With an overall length of 56' 4" and cylinders measuring 17" diameter by a 24" stroke the K Class weighed a total of 91.3 tons (55.5 for the loco and 35.8 for the tender). While records exist of the three Class K1s and the three Class K2s shipped to Burma during the Japanese occupation in WW2 for use in the Thai-Burma railway the entire fleet was accounted for when it was re-numbered in 1946. The K1 Class was entirely withdrawn between 1958 and 1959, while the K2 Class remained in use well into the 1970s when all steam locomotives were withdrawn.

Bill Moncur was a career officer with the Royal Engineers for more than 21 years, serving in Malaya, Korea and the occupation forces in post WW2 Germany. In Australia he served during 1963 and 1964 as the RE Exchange Officer at Chowder Bay in the role of Senior Instructor of the Transportation Centre RAE. In this position he had considerable contact with the personnel of 32 Small Ship Sqn, RAE, which was commanded of course, by a fellow Scot Jimmy Wilson.

The incident portrayed in this story took place several years before his time at Chowder Bay, but plainly shows how different things were in those days.

In offering this article, he particularly asks to be remembered to any Association members who may recall his time with them at Chowder Bay or at sea on board an LSM.

GLEN GEDDES - UNATTENDED OR NOT? **An article by Hugh Waldren**

Hugh Waldren was in the second intake of National Servicemen in 1965 and did his recruit training at Puckapunyal, Corps training at SME and was posted to 11 Movement Control Group which was then located at Neutral Bay. He left the Army in 1967 and worked for the P & O shipping company until the Iran / Iraq war in 1981 where four of the P & O cargo ships were left stranded in Basra and he was made redundant. He then joined Kapel Pacific shipping company as Shipping Manager and in 1982 joined the Melbourne Trams where he stayed until he retired after 30 years service. He lives in Camberwell, Victoria. Here is an interesting letter from him that was published in the Australian Railway Historical Society Bulletin in 2002....

Between 29th September 1965 and 28th September 1967 I served in the Australian Army as a National Serviceman. After Basic Training I was allocated to 11 Movement Control Group based then at Neutral Bay in Sydney right opposite the ferry wharf at the bottom of Hayes Street in an old three story mansion with outstanding views across Sydney Harbour. (This mansion has since been divided into luxury apartments.)

During January 1967 I was sent up to Rockhampton as a Rail Transport Officer for a number of exercises at the Shoalwater Bay Exercise Area. These exercises in 1967 had imaginative names like *KANGAROO 1*, *KANGAROO 2* etc. etc. (Exercises are still held at Shoalwater Bay on a regular basis.)

While in Rockhampton our unit lived on the old station platform (now demolished) which was between the steam engine shed and the diesel engine parking roads, making a night's sleep very difficult. We had use of a push bike, which came in very handy for chasing trains up and down Denison Street. On a couple of occasions my colleagues would have to cover for me, if I was required, until I returned on the push bike from a train chase.

However, for most of the four months that I was up North, they had me staying at Glen Geddes about 40km north from Rockhampton and the rail head for the Shoalwater Bay Exercise Area and living in the Station Office. My bed was a very old collapsible bed that did just that on occasions, with a very second hand mattress and an Army issue sleeping bag, which being in the tropics was too hot to sleep in, with a mosquito net rigged up to the ceiling. Even though it was hot, I kept the door shut to keep out all the roaming animals and snakes. One night I had to share the station with a group of drunken men, who thankfully did not realise that I was in the adjoining office. Although I was probably in no danger from these men, I spent a terrified night until they left about 1am.

During my stays at Glen Geddes I was given some Army ration packs, the contents of which did not look at all appealing, to feed me during my stay. However due to my good management and new friends I only opened one tin during my full stay and that was a tin of fruit salad. With the nearest shops being in Yaamba two stations to the south and Marlborough four stations to the north, making the shops too far to walk to, and not having an Army Vehicle to drive, made leaving Glen Geddes to look for food impossible. So how did I eat? Well, having befriended the gangers who were housed in small shacks along the railway line, every morning around 8 am they would leave me an egg, bacon, toast and a cup of coffee. For lunch about 2pm to 2.30pm



the South bound Sunlander would normally cross another train at Glen Geddes and as the Sunlander nearly always got there first they would have to wait. The ladies in the Dining car having got to know me would always pass me out a lunch that was not required. This gave me a wonderful variety in lunches.

Now for dinner, the wife of the Chief Ganger lived with her husband in a house close to the station. She was the Pay Mistress for the gangers, the Telephone Exchange Operator for the PMG and the Station Mistress for the Queensland Railways (as John Knowles correctly described in his letter to the Bulletin 778). As her duties were time consuming, especially being the telephone exchange operator, if she was required to check the goods vehicles in the yard, it meant leaving the house, and so if any one in the telephone exchange area was trying to telephone, they would not be able to get through. So in exchange for dinner I agreed to do some of her Station Mistress's duties. This helped me from getting bored during the day and provided me with a wonderful meal at night. I can always remember the expression on a Major's face when one evening about 6.30pm he came up behind me and said "Sapper Waldron how is the ration pack going?" As he came closer he found me eating a T Bone steak with vegetables with Apple Pie to follow. I replied "Very well thank you Sir." To which he said "You certainly appear to be eating very well."

In addition the lady had a 16 year old girl working for her to assist with the housework, who was obviously smitten by my uniform, as she always arrived about 10.30am and about 4pm with morning and afternoon Tea. This was regardless of whom else was there. On a number of occasions while supervising the unloading of freight wagons along with Majors, Lieutenants, Sergeants and of course lower ranks who did all the hard work, this wonderful girl would still bring my morning and afternoon tea with no extra's even for the Major. The family also possessed a very large Alsatian Dog who fortunately became a very good friend of mine, following me for long periods during the day, and sometimes keeping me company at night. Thank goodness he was friendly to me, as woe betide any one he did not know who approached the house at night.

One day I received a parcel from Sydney from Robynne, my girlfriend (who is now my wife). The note accompanying the parcel read, "Please find four packets of biscuits so that you can eat some food that does not come from an Army ration pack". My letters home obviously did not explain the true hardships I was experiencing!!!

On one occasion I was required to organise and accompany a goods train to Glen Geddes. The day beforehand I went to train control in Rockhampton and requested the train. The train controller was most apologetic and indicated to me that there was no diesel engine available. On looking down into the yard I noticed B18¼ and 899 in the yard. I indicated to the controller that I would be very happy to have the B18¼ as my motive power. He said that the engine was only used as a last resort but would see what he could do. Thus it was that about 2.30am on Saturday 15th April 1967 I set out on board train 247D in van 926. This train received the lowest priority of any train I have ever travelled on as at every crossing loop we were the train that waited and waited. After the sun came up we were still not at Glen Geddes but that did give us time to stop for a photo stop. By now I was riding on the engine, and we finally arrived at Glen Geddes at about 8am (seven and a half hours after departure). On arrival the Major was very surprised to see me sitting on the Fireman's seat with two cameras slung over my head. After the train was shunted into the siding a new crew arrived by road to return the engine to Rockhampton, while I



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continued to supervise the unloading of the train and the dispatch of the empty wagons on the afternoon pick up at about 5.30pm.

After another very nice dinner I received a call indicating that 16 Armoured Personnel Carriers plus 18 troops would arrive at midnight, and would I please supervise the unloading. Putting the phone down and being very tired as it was now 7.30pm and I had been awake since 1.30am I decided to ring railway control and check the train's arrival. On speaking to the controller I was advised that the train was running 30 minutes late. Realising that all I wanted to do was sleep I suggested to the controller that he remove the Army consignment at Rockhampton and send it up on the morning pick up to arrive at Glen Geddes at 8am. The controller thought this was a marvellous idea as it would get the first train back on time. So after a good night sleep I awoke fresh and alert at about 7.30am to be ready for the pick-up train at 8am. Just after the train arrived the phone rang, it was the Lieutenant Colonel in charge of the whole exercise asking where the Armoured Personal Carriers were. I explained that they had just arrived, with that he said "Well that's Queensland Railways for you", and hung up the phone. I later learned that the troops on exercise had all been up since 4am ready to expel an attack by the Armoured Personnel Carriers that of course never came. One of my friends who now lives in Adelaide has still not forgiven me for having to be up at 4am that day!!! Even the troops on the train expressed their surprise on waking up to find themselves in the marshalling yards at Rockhampton with no engine on their train.

While in Rockhampton some years ago I was able to ask the Stationmaster how much freight was sent by the Army these days to Glen Geddes. He indicated that very little freight is now shipped for the Army and very few troops now travel by rail, certainly they do not have the troop trains that were run to Glen Geddes during the Vietnam War. For a short while Glen Geddes was used by a nearby Nickel Mine as the loading point. So for a while large shipments of Nickel were made from there. There was a large shed constructed for this movement, but this shed was demolished prior to my last visit to Glen Geddes in October 1996.

During my time staying at Glen Geddes I can confirm that all safe working through Glen Geddes was done by the train crews. During my stay the only steam working was the Pick Up Train that operated between Rockhampton and St. Laurence, usually passing Glen Geddes around 8 am on the trip to St. Laurence returning at around 5 pm in the evening.

GLEN GEDDES -Revisited **by Jack Madden**

In the 1970s I was the train commander and together with a bunch of planties we were at Glen Geddes for a 24 Spt Sqn plant return to Brisbane. Naturally it took Queensland rail a week to marshal enough flat-top wagons required. Did you know you can carry eight soldiers in a 966b Front End Loader to the Yaamba pub. The Cat 12 grader could only fit six. We had an arrangement with the Station Master at Yaamba. There was a local freight train about 2:00am and the SM would stop it at Yaamba and allow the 'not so sober' sappers into the guard's van. The 966b was recovered later in the day. This happened a few times that week. The cook was a nondrinker so he became the picquet at Glen Geddes.

As one of the authors of an article in this NTM said.....it would never happen today!



MODEL LSM

Frank Poole recently advised that a 1/44 (431mm long) scale model of an LSM is being distributed by Revell. It can be purchased for \$63.54 from:

Frontline Hobbies
255 Hunter Street
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300

Phone: 1300 764 466 (local call cost)
Email: sales@frontlinehobbies.com.au
Fax: 02 4929 1140

Postage is about \$15.00. Note that it won't be as good as the two LSMs Ian Johnstone built.

Here's a bit of a description about an LSM (as if you need to know):

Landing Ships of the LSM-Class (Landing Ship Medium) were used from the middle of 1944 by the U.S. Navy in the fight against Japan in the Pacific. Totalling more than 550 ships they were the main component of the amphibious forces for landing troops and vehicles on enemy beaches. The loading capacity of a LSM roughly corresponded to a mechanized platoon. The steel hull had nine watertight bulkheads. With an anchor located at the stern, the ships could withdraw from the beach without assistance. Armour plating protected the superstructures against small arms fire. The early LSM were mostly equipped with six 20-mm Oerlikon guns for self defence. The open-top cargo area encompassed almost the entire length of the ship and was at maximum 7.9 m (26 ft) wide. By the end of the war, nine ships were lost mainly due to kamikaze attacks. After the end of World War 2 some ships went into service with allies armed forces. In 1958 NATO partners Germany received three LSM and two LSM(R).



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TRANSPORTATION CENTRE DEPLOYMENT TO LORD HOWE ISLAND – 1958

Les Dennis sent in this interesting story about *AV1351 Vasse's* trip to Lord Howe Island... Jack Madden's account of the John Monash voyage to Lord Howe Island brought back memories for me. In 1958, after completing the FE3 Course at SME, Ian Johnston, Dave Lyons and I were posted to Chowder Bay on the Trainee strength of Tn Centre. Having settled in, a few days later we attended the unit briefing by the Adjutant, Captain Frank Guest. The unit as a whole, including cooks, stores peoples and anyone else on the books were deploying to Lord Howe Island. But not, it transpired, the three newcomers who would be left behind to hold the fort. I didn't think this was fair and queried the decision. The Adjutant then decided that we would also sail which pleased me but maybe didn't endear me to Ian and Dave. Apart from the deployment being a training exercise, we were taking much needed food supplies for the island and a four wheel drive vehicle.

The cargo was duly loaded aboard the *Vasse*, one of the army's two, 300 ton, two hatch, and wooden cargo vessel, at Walsh Bay, adjacent to the Harbour Bridge and on which I was a crew member. I might add that a sizeable amount of the cargo was 200 dozen cartons of beer for the thirsty residents.

The next day, being in all respects ready for sea the armada of vessels, comprising the *Vasse*, the 92ft steel tug *Mollymawk*, the 62ft command craft *Fern* and the 112 ft Fairmile *Sandra*, sailed for their destination in the Tasman Sea, some 370miles(600km) due East of Port Macquarie. It was approximately a forty eight hour journey and involved dead reckoning and sun and star sights by the navigators. No radar in those days. When it was estimated that the island should be appearing on the horizon it was all hands on deck to act as lookouts. All eyes were peeled for the first tell tale sign of land when Dougie Wooton, the second engineer, reported land on the port bow. Despite all efforts no one else could see any sign of the island. Suddenly Dougie exclaimed, "delete all reference to land. Insert speck on glasses." But it wasn't long after that Balls Pyramid hove into sight and we were there.

We anchored off the lagoon and prepared to discharge our precious cargo. This would prove to be a lengthy process as the only means of transferring the cargo was by two whale boats with a platform lashed between the two boats. The four wheel drive was the first ashore without any mishap. Then it was just a matter of a steady movement of the improvised catamaran ferrying the remainder of the cargo ashore.

Apart from the limited ship to shore transport available, weather conditions played a significant part in the slow rate of discharge. We were forever moving from the lagoon side of the island to Neds Beach on the other side to seek shelter, which meant that all operations were ceased until returning to the lagoon side. So frequent was the change of anchorage that I think the ship eventually was capable of finding its own way from one side to the other. All told I believe it took ten days to fully discharge the *Vasse*.

The night before we were due to sail back to Chowder Bay the Islanders put on a dinner dance for the crews in the residence of the Civil Aviation Supervisor, Mr Fenton. Bearing in mind that access to the island was by means of the flying boats from Rose Bay in Sydney and which landed in the lagoon.



On the night in question all but the duty crews prepared to go ashore, which entailed wearing shorts and carrying your clothes, as arriving on the island by our tender necessitated wading ashore in waist deep water onto the beach. Everyone was prepared for this except our Senior Instructor, who shall remain nameless, and decided to go ashore fully dressed. Arriving at the beach he discovered the wisdom of getting dressed once ashore. But nothing daunted him and he nominated Dave Lyons to carry him ashore on his shoulders. Dave was a big solid man who could easily bear the weight and proceeded to hoist the Major onto his shoulders and deliver his passenger ashore. Unfortunately a few steps in Dave lost his balance and they both ended up in the water.

Our leader presented on the doorstep of the residence a much bedraggled figure and Mrs Fenton took him in charge, leading him away to get dry and change into some dry clothes. He emerged looking resplendent in a white blouse and red matador pants, the only clothes that could be found that reasonably fitted him. It was a sight that remains clearly in my mind today.

Dave swears that he tripped but we believe he fell accidentally on purpose. And it was like a homecoming for Dave as he had worked on the Civil Aviation launch there for some time in the past and was a familiar figure on the island.

A few years later the Fenton's daughter, Rosemary, who was in her late teens and captivated many of the crews, won the Miss Australia title and eventually married the leader of the National Party, Ian Sinclair. Late that night we returned to the beach, only to find that the tender had swamped and we would have to sleep on the beach until morning. This didn't present any problem and we returned on board at daylight.

So after ten days at Lord Howe Island we set sail for Chowder Bay, arriving back there approximately forty eight hours later. Although I had been to Chowder Bay four years earlier as part of a CMF crew sailing the Fairmile back from Brisbane, I felt that it was a wonderful introduction to my future life at Transportation Centre.

Another link with Jack's account is in regard to the missed RV with the LSM *Harry Chauvel* in Wellington. I was one of the students on the Deck Watchkeeper course doing our practical celestial navigation training. We were held up because three of the crew had hired a car and were involved in an accident. The following investigation meant that we could not sail until it was sorted out with the police and the insurance company.

This delayed us for a week during which time I was able to attend the Wahine inquiry where it was evident that the Captain was being blamed with no attention being paid to the circumstances of which he had no control, nor the full support of all of his crew. Eventually they predictably found him solely responsible and he never went to sea again. The authorities who were guilty of many errors in their rescue attempts emerged scot free. We sailed with a full crew complement and proceeded to Norfolk Island, Cairns and Brisbane before returning to Chowder Bay".

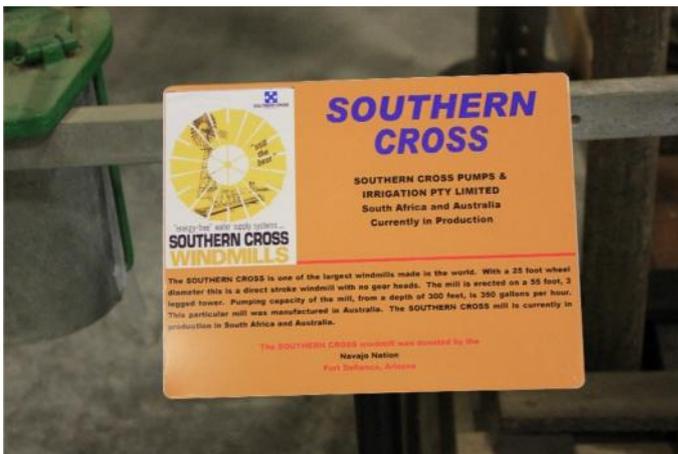




AV1351 Vasse

Did you notice this?

Did anybody pick up that there was a Southern Cross windmill in the photo of Fairbanks Morse's 14 ft Eclipse windmill photo in the last edition? Well here it is - the biggest windmill known in the US - Australian 25 ft Southern Cross from Toowoomba. Doesn't it make you feel proud that we beat the Yanks?



Southern Cross 25ft (7.5mr) windmill at Texas Windpower Museum Lubbock TX. Too big to fit in a frontal photo!



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Property for sale

Association Ties	\$25.00	LSM Lapel Badge	\$12.00
Association Book	\$30.00	Collar Badge	\$6.00
Army Mariners Book	\$45.00	Association Woven Patch	\$8.00
Association Cap Navy Blue	\$15.00	Car Stickers	\$6.00
Association Polo Shirt (navy blue only) made to order			\$30.00

Please contact Kaye Shannon 02 9871 4667 or property@32smallshipsqn.org.au or you can order via our web page at www.32smallshipsqn.org.au

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Contributions

Contributions are welcome from members and their families of anything that is of interest of members. So, if you would like to contribute it doesn't have to be typed or in electronic form (although that helps). Just send it to the editor at

editor@32smallshipsqn.org.au

or to

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Please let the Association know if you get a new email address or change your current one. The same goes for your postal address. Remember, we want to keep in touch with you!



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